Shropshire Entomology

A bi-annual newsletter focusing on the study of insects and other invertebrates in Shropshire (Vice County 40)

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Welcome

Welcome to the 12th edition of *Shropshire Entomology*.

This edition includes some County Recorder reports for 2016 and the usual mix of other articles. Please do continue to submit your notes and articles. We are particularly keen to receive notes of new species for Shropshire. The deadline for the next edition, to be published November/December is 31 October 2016 at vc40insects@talktalk.net

Nigel Jones and Gordon Leel

Shropshire Entomology is published online as a freely available pdf from http://www.shropshireecology.co.uk/entomology.html

Past newsletters are still available for download as PDFs from www.invertebrate-challenge.org.uk/newsletters-and-resources.aspx

Submission guidelines for articles

Please wherever possible state authors for key species mentioned in the article eg. *Phaeostigma notata* (Fabricius, 1781)

Photographs should ideally be above 200kb in size. We may crop photos to fit. Please provide the photographer's name or the source of the photograph.

Please send text in a word file. Only use capital letters for site or people's names. Lower case letters should be used for vernacular or common species names except for those named after someone e.g.; Fallen's leatherbug.

Many thanks, the Editors

Contents

A new earthworm species for Shropshire 2
Charlie Bell

Dudmaston Tiger Cranefly 3
Dave Barnett

Notable finds at Underton quarry pools 5
David Williams

An earwig with male and female characters 6
David Williams

Micro-moth highlights of 2016 (so far) 7
Godfrey Blunt

Andrena nigrospina Thomson, 1872 – a rare mining bee new to Shropshire 8
Nigel Jones

A new wasp for Shropshire - *Triaspis podlussanyi* Papp, 1998 9
Ian Thompson

Joy of Wildlife field trips 2016 10
Keith Fowler

Omphiscola glabra, Pond Mud Snail - a new site for Shropshire. 12
Mags Cousins

An impressive Cimbicid! 14
Maria Justamond

Shropshire Ento Day 2016 14

Neomochtherus pallipes (Meigen, 1820) – is this Shropshire's rarest insect? 15
Nigel Jones

Diptera – true flies report 16
Nigel Jones

A PUZZLE – seeking a solution 18
Graham Wenman

SHROPSHIRE ENTOMOLOGY DAY
Sunday, 11 December 2016
see page 14 for booking details

A new earthworm species for Shropshire

Charlie Bell

Earthworms are an incredibly under-recorded group, a worrying fact given their importance for soil structure, soil fertility and drainage. As such, they have been one of the target groups for the FSC's Tomorrow's Biodiversity project run by Rich Burkmar and myself. We have been working closely with the Earthworm Society of Britain over the last few years, running workshops and identification weekends and developing new identification resources, such as the online multi-access key to earthworms. We have also been upskilling ourselves when it comes to earthworm identification, and trying to make as many records as possible – all adding to our sparse knowledge about the distribution of UK earthworm species.

Earlier in the year the FSC Biodiversity team received an invite to visit Harper Adams University, along with various local entomologists. The aim of the day was to view their (very impressive) facilities, hear about the wide range of entomological work they do there, including the only Entomology MSc in the UK, and discuss ways of linking in and collaborating in the future. It was a very interesting day, spoiled only by the weather - sudden heavy downpours and freezing cold wind which left us scampering quickly from building to building.

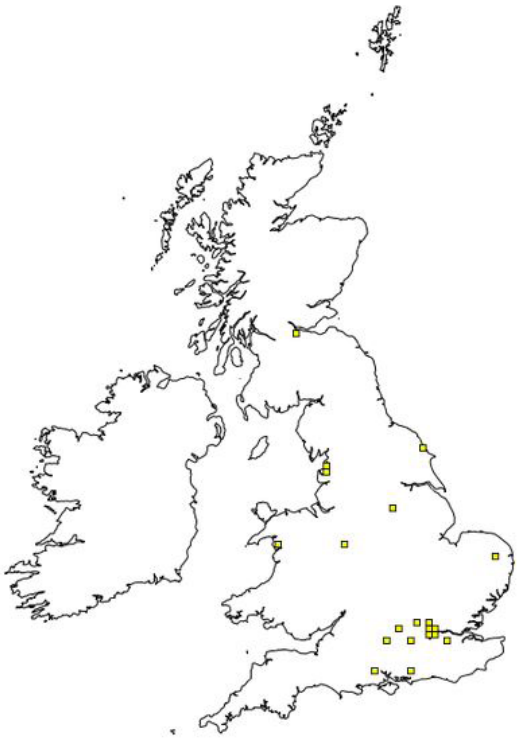
Later in the day the rain cleared up a bit and we were taken on a more extensive tour of the grounds. As we made our way back to the main building, on a surfaced path through the large lawn area at the front of the college, I spotted a worm wriggling its way across the path – a not uncommon sight after rain. I happened to have a tube in my bag and collected the worm, but given the biting wind I didn't really give it a second thought, expecting it to be one of the more common species we've been finding in Shropshire.

Later that day, back in the warmth of FSC Head Office, I examined the worm under the microscope. Earthworm ID is mainly a matter of examining a few key features, and carefully counting segments to determine on which segments certain features occur. The FSC AIDGAP key by Emma Sherlock is my 'go to' ID guide, and I duly ran the Harper Adams worm through the key. Much to my surprise, it keyed out to a species called *Apporectodea icterica* (Savigny, 1826) which, according to the key, is a rare species found in grasslands and orchards. This species was not only a new record for Shropshire but, on examination of the NBN gateway, only the 38th record in the UK and the first for the Midlands. We even made the local paper thanks to a Harper Adams press release – fame at last! Not bad for a chance encounter on a footpath.

Reference

Sherlock, E. 2012 *Key to Earthworms of the UK and Ireland*, Field Studies Council, Preston Montford.

Charlie Bell – Field Studies Council, Preston Montord.



Map: UK records for *Apporectodea icterica*

Dudmaston Tiger Cranefly

Dave Barnett

Dudmaston is close to where I work and makes an ideal place to visit on a lunchtime. This year after agreeing to submit my records to the National Trust I have made a concerted effort to record and visit regularly. This article arose purely by accident following a sighting of a cranefly spread-eagled on a Mayweed (photograph).

The choice between taking a photograph or collecting is always difficult. This time I resisted collecting believing it to be a species that could be easily identified. And yes it was posing nicely for a photograph. However, on examination of the photos it was not the species I expected, and was left in the vain hope I might be able to identify it from keys and other sources of information. So this is the theme of my article.

The area is above Wall Pool by a path leading along the edge of the adjoining field. The Cranefly is a female Tiger cranefly of the group *Nephrotoma* which consists of 15 British species. I managed to take three photographs before it flew away. Dudmaston has a few sandy areas that should attract species of Tiger cranefly that like this soil type.

This cranefly has very different markings from ones I have encountered before. The dark wing stigma is present as in *N. appendiculata* but that is probably as far as any similarity goes. The inverted U mark which is diagnostic in this species is obscured. Even without this I am very doubtful that this is the species. What is interesting and should be distinctive is the continuous dark band on the tergites, interrupted only on the last three tergites. The dark tip to the femur and the large dark mark on the head should distinguish it from other tiger craneflies.

Not to be put off I resorted to looking at my old photos and voucher specimens. I checked through A E Stubbs' provisional Cranefly keys and R L Coe's (1950) RES key, which still has the most detailed descriptions, and to Peter Boardman's draft

Fig 1-3: Dudmaston Wall Pool field, close up of *Nephrotoma cornicina*, and resting in Scentless Mayweed (photos: Dave Barnett)

Shropshire Atlas for what species may be expected in this area - unfortunately to no avail.

The theme of photographic identification led me to look at what species I already had. Of the six Shropshire species the only one I had not encountered was *Nephrotoma cornicina*.

A few weeks ago I brought home a dead cranefly which had expired on the factory floor where I work in Bridgnorth. It was a *Nephrotoma* and a female! A bit dryed up (Fig 5), but I mounted it on card and keyed it out to *N. quadrifaria*. The dark wing stigma and clouded wing tip is typical of this species. This did not help but I have shown the photo for comparison. *N. quadrifaria* has the black quadrate spots separated by yellow bands at the base of each tergite. *N. analis* has the yellow bands at the apex (Fig 4).

The challenge is can we build up a photo collection of tiger craneflies for Shropshire to help with field identification? It seems a great pity to capture and kill them to enable accurate recordings to be made.

Fig 4: *Nephrotoma analis* Wyre – Postensplain (June 2006) (photo: Dave Barnett)

Fig 5: *Nephrotoma quadrifaria* Bridgnorth Aluminium (July 2016) (photo: Dave Barnett)

Well, I am close to a complete collection of the commoner *Nephrotoma* species. I have specimens and photos of *N. analis*, *N. appendiculata*, *N. flavescens*, *N. flavipalpis*, *N. quadrifaria* and *N.scurra*. Six out of ten species in Shropshire. If you have *N. cornicina*, please send me your photos. Any others would be a bonus. Malaise specimens probably not! I will put together a photo guide which I am happy to share as long as the other contributors are also willing.

31st July – reply from Peter Boardman to my email with images:

This is female Nephrotoma cornicina as it has a pointed female cerci, a dark stigma, and Ill-defined pleural markings.

The new atlas has updated maps (updated to 2014) and 500 or so colour photos of craneflies and their habitats. I think FSC publications are looking to get it printed over this winter but I've not had a recent update.

Thanks Peter. It was *N. cornicina* after all! The moral of the tale is you don't have to go it alone when there is someone around who can help. The new Cranefly Altas promises to be a must when it comes out. However I shall continue taking photographs and my request and challenge still stands.

References

Boardman, P.2007, *A Provisional Account of the Craneflies of Shropshire*

Chandler, P. 1998, *Checklists for British Insects. Vol 12 Diptera*. Royal Entomological Society, London

Coe R.L. 1950, *Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects. Vol. IX Part 2 Diptera*. Royal Entomological Society, London

Stubbs, A.E. 1996, *Provisional Cranefly keys* (Addenda). Unpublished manuscript.

Notable finds at Underton quarry pools

David Williams

Elsewhere in this issue, Nigel Jones has detailed some significant finds from our trip to Pam's Pools (or, more correctly, to the adjacent worked-out quarry at Underton) on 19th June 2016. I also came away from the day with a couple of nice finds. The first was actually spotted by Jim Cresswell, who pointed out a wasp to me. I tend to have little expectation of being able to resolve wasps to species from photographs, but as it was sitting so co-operatively, I took a series of pictures of it anyway. Working through the keys later, I found that I could get it down to one of two species. Of these two, it was a much better visual match for *Argogorytes fargeii* (Shuckard, 1837). This species is listed on the BWARS website (www.bwars.com) as Scarce (Na), and has been recorded in Shropshire only once previously, in June 2014 by Ian Cheeseborough at (inevitably) Devil's Dingle. Ian has since confirmed my identification from the photographs.

During the day, I also beat several small bush-cricket nymphs from the rank vegetation around the site. These were clearly one of the two conehead species. Based upon the habitat in which they were found, it is probable that they are long-winged conehead, *Conocephalus fuscus* (Fabricius, 1793). This species is currently known from one breeding site within the county (Devil's Dingle again), plus a couple of other records of single individuals. However, nymphs are very difficult to separate from those of the short-winged conehead, *Conocephalus dorsalis* (Latrielle, 1804), so a return visit later in the summer when they have matured to adulthood is required. The latter species is not recorded from VC40.

Editor's note: Ian Cheeseborough and Nigel Jones returned to Underton quarry pools on 6 July 2016 where several *A. fargeii* were seen, including a small nesting aggregation in loose sand.

Argogorytes fargeii, Pam's Pools (photo: David Williams)

Conehead nymph, Pam's Pools (photo: David Williams)

An earwig with male and female characters

David Williams

On April 24th 2016, the Shropshire Invertebrate Group held a field trip at Shawbury Heath. In accordance with the general character of Spring 2016 the weather was cold and damp, and finds were generally thin on the ground and unremarkable. However, in beating a stand of bramble, *Rubus fruticosus* L. an unusual common earwig, *Forficula auricularia* (Linnaeus, 1758), dropped into my tray. The notable features of this individual are the forceps, with one each 'male' and 'female' in form (male earwigs have forceps which are broad at the base and strongly curved, whereas females are narrower at the base and more gently curving). In other respects the insect seemed to be male: it has the correct number of visible abdominal segments for a male (females have two fewer). I took several photographs of it and then returned it from whence it came.

Was this a true gynandromorph or just a male with a deformity? I emailed the photographs to the organisers of the National Recording Scheme in May, asking if similar occurrences were known or indeed common. I am currently awaiting a reply.

Detail of forceps (photo David Williams)

Common earwig, Shawbury Heath (photo David Williams).

Micro-moth highlights of 2016 (so far)

Godfrey Blunt

A slow spring, indifferent weather and poor early light-trapping results mean there is little to report from the early months, except for a remarkably unseasonal *Eudonia lacustrata* (Panzer, 1804) that Peter Deans trapped at Cross Lane Head on 19th March. The flight period of this moth begins in mid-May, and enquiries have so far failed to come up with any other March records for it.

Things started to turn around in the last week of May, when most light-trappers began to record a good range of species. On the 28th we had a new species for the vice-county when, on a Wyre Forest Study Group meeting to Earnwood Copse, Oliver Wadsworth beat a *Pseudatemelia subochreella* (Doubleday, 1859) from an oak tree, the specimen being verified by the CMR for Worcestershire, Tony Simpson. This is a local woodland moth of southern England; it is known from the Worcestershire Wyre, and its appearance in the Shropshire part was to be expected sooner or later.

The second species new to the vice-county was more of a surprise, as it concerns a moth at the very southern edge of its British range (only a single site in west Herefordshire lies further south). This is *Denisia similella* (Hübner, 1796) which turned up in Graham Wenman's trap at Church Stretton on 22nd June. Its identity was initially a puzzle as the standard field guide does not show the range of variation in this species, but it was identified by the CMR for Yorkshire, Charlie Fletcher. The larvae feed on fungi on decaying wood, and this record may indicate that it survives in Shropshire as a rare relict species; its sudden appearance in the centre of the vice-county is otherwise hard to explain.

Perhaps a similar status might account for an even more astonishing record. On 3rd June Tom Hayek found a strange moth in his light-trap in the farmyard of Longner Hall. After much research and deliberation he concluded it must be *Borkhausenia minutella* (Linnaeus, 1758) and this has been confirmed by John Langmaid. The astounding fact is that the species is considered extinct in Britain. A century ago it was not that uncommon, and we have a Shropshire record from 1930. Its larva feeds on dead vegetable matter, typically in barns and outhouses; Tom's record raises the possibility that this moth might linger undetected in one or two old farm buildings and stables, which are hardly the haunts of the modern lepidopterist. The large tabby *Aglossa pinguinalis* (Linnaeus, 1758), another moth of this habitat, has also become much less frequently recorded over the last century, and one found by Dan Knight at Oswestry in 2015 was the first for Shropshire in nearly three decades.

Denisia similella (photo: Graham Wenman)

Borkansenia minutella (photo: T. Hayek)

Immigration has been much in the news this year. For the micro-moth enthusiast the immigration

in question is that of the diamond-back moth *Plutella xylostella* (Linnaeus, 1758) which arrived in England in great numbers in early June. We are still putting together the full picture for Shropshire, but early reports show that our vice-county has had its fair share of these immigrants, certainly more than in any year since 1996. The night of 3rd June witnessed the main influx, after which numbers tailed off rapidly; however, observations made among arable crops at Edgmond by Jim and Anne Shaw and myself on 7th July suggest that numbers are again on the increase, perhaps representing the progeny of the first influx.

Andrena nigrospina Thomson, 1872 – a rare mining bee new to Shropshire

Nigel Jones

Rosemary Winnal emailed me in June to convey the exciting news that she had photographed the rare mining bee *Andrena nigrospina* in Kinlet. According to Falk (2015) this bee has "shown a catastrophic decline" in Britain, with modern records "concentrated in the Worcestershire-Staffordshire border and brownfield sites of the Essex Thames Gateway". Jones and Cheeseborough (2014) flagged up *A. nigrospina* as a bee that might well be discovered in Shropshire, as it has been present very close to the county border around Bewdley for some years, as well as not so far off at Highgate Common, Staffordshire.

Rosemary reported that the bee was nectaring on ground elder *Aegopodium podagraria* in a farm garden close to flower rich meadows. There are sandy soils on the farm, where horse grazing has created bare areas which might well host nests. Unfortunately poor weather and commitments prevented Ian Cheeseborough and me from investigating the area for nests and hopefully more individuals. We hope, with farmer's permission, to do so in 2017.

This record brings the total of aculeate species recorded in Shropshire to 322 – five species having been added since publication of the Shropshire aculeate atlas in 2014.

Andrena nigrospina at Kinlet (photo: Rosemary Winnall)

References

Falk, S.J. 2015. *Field Guide to the Bees of Great Britain and Ireland.* Bloomsbury . London

Jones, N., Cheeseborough, I. 2014. *A Provisional Atlas of the Bees, Wasps and Ants of Shropshire.* Field Studies Council.

A new wasp for Shropshire - *Triaspis podlussanyi* Papp, 1998

Ian Thompson

In the last edition of Shropshire Entomology I wrote a piece about the discovery of *Ixapion variegatum* (Wencker, 1864), the mistletoe weevil, at a total of seven south Shropshire orchard sites in 2015.

This spring we have again been surveying orchards on the border with Herefordshire and Worcestershire for a variety of orchard specialist invertebrates.

On 16th May our first survey day, at Weston Court farm, Nash, Jim Cresswell clipped from a heavily mistletoe infested apple tree what appeared to be, when sighted from the ground, a typical twig showing the diagnostic leaf dieback which we anticipated would be another weevil record. The twig however had no exit hole and was kept by me so that I could breed out an adult weevil in due course. On 20th May on inspection of the box a very small exit hole of less than 1mm diameter was found at the point where the weevil pupa would have been and a tiny c. 2.5 mm long black parasitic wasp was eventually located amongst the leaves.

Exit hole in mistletoe weevil chamber (photo: Ian Thompson)

Triapsis podlussanyi (photo: David Williams)

The specimen together with the twig was sent to the Identification and Advice team at the Natural History Museum and they reported that the wasp was *Triaspis podlussanyi* Papp, 1998 (Hymenoptera; Braconidae; Brachistinae) a species new to Britain. Howard Mendel of the NHM has this year bred out this species from mistletoe invertebrates, but in his case the hosts were beetles of the Anobiidae or Cerambycidae families. The specimen was a male and as the NHM has only females in the collections it has on request been donated to them. The website for Fauna Europa gives Germany and Hungary as the only countries where this species was formerly known.

Exit hole in mistletoe weevil chamber (photo: David Williams)

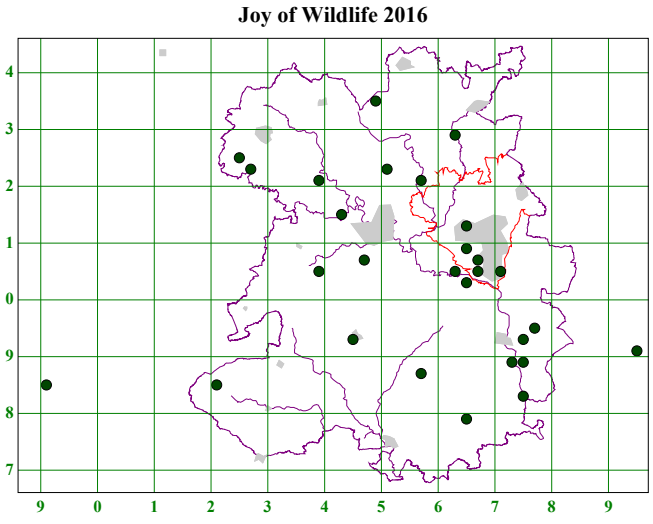
We found during the remaining orchard survey days two more twigs having the very tiny exit holes (much smaller and neater than those made by *I. variegatum*) in each case where the mistletoe weevil was also found, so a total of three sites in an area a maximum of 3.25 km wide east to west. That would indicate that the wasp has been here for some time but overlooked. Interestingly we found no evidence of this parasite last year at any sites visited, including another orchard at Weston Court farm.

Joy of Wildlife field trips 2016

Keith Fowler

This is the fifth year I have arranged "walks" to encourage the enjoyment and recording of wildlife. The emphasis has changed over that time but this aim still holds.

Forty-four events have been arranged this year at over thirty sites scattered around the county and beyond (see map) but biased towards Telford (as that is where I live). Unfortunately at the events held so far the weather has been the talking point as much as the wildlife and we are beginning to learn which trees can be used as an umbrella and those which should be avoided.



Numbers attending have varied but there is generally a core of half a dozen with others dipping in and out when they wish. Numbers are not an issue from my viewpoint as I would go on my own if no-one else wanted to come, and on one occasion this happened. However, larger numbers do mean a wider range of knowledge and experience from which we all benefit.

We have visited a number of old haunts, for example Loamhole Dingle, Coalbrookdale; The Ercall LNR; The Hem in Telford and the Ash Disposal site in Buildwas (Devil's Dingle). But there have been plenty of new sites to explore, such as the grounds of Benthall Hall; Hilton Sand Pit; Abdon Church and Blackridge Quarry. In addition a couple of out of county trips were arranged to Richard Becker's farm near Llanidloes and to St John's churchyard in Dudley.

The year started with a beautiful day at Eardington Quarry in January. Here on a glorious winter's day we tried our hand at the delightful art of springtail capture.

Looking for springtails (photo: Keith Fowler)

In March we had an excellent day, again in wonderful weather, at Hopton Woods and The Cliffe, where we were joined by the Tombio team. We had our first probable county first of the season, the psyllid *Aphalara exilis* (Weber & Mohr, 1804). However there is a confusion species *A. pauli* (Loginova, 1979) so it requires further work on it before a final determination can be reached. Neither have been recorded in the county before.

The season of weekly walks started on the first Wednesday in April at Stanmore Country Park

Why work in an office?; (photo: Keith Fowler)

in Bridgnorth and has continued since with a few events on Fridays and Sundays thrown in for good measure just in case we thought we were not getting out enough!

I could not attend the event at The Ercall LNR due to an incident in the home but hail and snow did not stop the walkers. I had to cancel the following trip to Shawbury Moat but members of the group turned up anyway! On the Wednesday of the subsequent week it was monsoon-like; the walk was officially cancelled but some of us made the trip and were treated to a rewarding afternoon as the rain stopped followed by tea and cake at the visitor centre and included making the first county record of the ground bug *Eremocoris podagricus* (Fabricius, 1775).

My local patch, Dothill, attained Local Nature Reserve status early this year so I included a series of visits to the site within the programme in the hope of improving the site species list. It has certainly proved beneficial to the hemiptera list as we have found two species that are, subject to verification, new to the county. In April we discovered the anthocorid bug *Buchaniella continua* (White 1880), a recent arrival to our shores, in vegetation on the edge of Tee Lake. And in June we found the ground bug *Acompus rufipes* (Wolff, 1804) in an area of rough grassland.

A novelty for this year has been Sunday outings, the highlight being a visit to Richard Becker's farm near Llandidloes. Unfortunately the weather did not oblige. It was a dull and drizzly day, although the sun came out whilst we were lunching. To brighten our day even further a small pearl bordered fritillary perched on the vegetation in front of us and stayed there whilst numerous photographs were taken.

Small pearl bordered fritillary (photo: Keith Fowler)

We have continued our visits to Lea Quarry but have reduced the frequency. On our second visit of the year in May we recorded the harvestman *Homalenotus quadridentatus* (Cuvier, 1795) for the first time in the county.

When we made the trek to Rhos Fiddle we were treated to two flies new for the county - *Minettia flaviventris* (Costa, 1844) and *Microdon myrmicae* Schönrogge *et al.*, 2002.

The weekly walks continue until the end of September. During the following six months we will venture out once a month with, no doubt, some ad hoc trips in between. Then, all being well we will start the weekly programme again next April. You are welcome to join us. Please contact me if you are interested.

Microdon myrmicae (photo: Nigel Jones)

Keith Fowler; email: keith.c.fowler@blueyonder.co.uk

Omphiscola glabra, Pond Mud Snail - a new site for Shropshire.

Mags Cousins

Omphiscola glabra (Müller, 1774) is an aquatic snail restricted to temporary freshwater pools, ditches, marshes and seepages, especially on unimproved grassland and heaths with nutrient poor water. The snails burrow into soft mud to survive summer drying so can also be found on the drawdown zone of permanent pools. In the UK it was widespread but local and has declined significantly probably due to the loss of these specialised habitats which are vulnerable to succession, nutrient enrichment and changes to the hydrology. It is now classed as Vulnerable (RDB2, UK Red Data Book), Near Threatened by the IUCN and is a Section 41 Priority Species (NERC Act, 2006).

I undertook to resurvey the sites for *O. glabra* in Shropshire for the Freshwater Habitats Trust through their PondNet survey for rare species. Post the late 1800s there were just two previous sites; in a ditch at Whixall Moss in 1992 by Ian Wallace and the Liverpool University Survey Team and again in 1993 by K G Allenby (determined by M P Kerney) and in a marsh now bisected by the Hodnet Bypass, in 1966, also determined by M P Kerney. I made a thorough search of both these locations but did not find any *O. glabra*. The ditch at Whixall was still present though may have changed in character as restoration of the moss has proceeded. The ditch did support low numbers of *Pisidium* sp. Pea mussel, *Physella acuta* agg. (Draparnaud, 1805) an introduced bladder snail and *Sphaerium corneum* Horny orb mussel. The remaining fen near the Hodnet bypass had *Lymnaea palustris* Marsh pond snail, *Succinea putris* Large amber snail and *Pisidium* sp. amongst the *Glyceria maxima*, *Iris pseudacorus*, *Carex paniculata*, *Caltha palustris* and *Stellaria alsine*. The fen would have been more extensive before the bypass was built but as far as I know there was no search for *Omphiscola glabra* beforehand. Dan Wrench and I also searched the new ponds at Wollerton which were constructed as part of the scheme. Although these now support a range of wetland flora and fauna, including 11 species of mollusc, unsurprisingly there were no *O. glabra*.

Brown Moss SSSI seemed like the next obvious place to look; not far from Hodnet and with a long history of semi natural wetlands with naturally fluctuating water levels. Sure enough first dip in the first pond yielded *Omphiscola glabra*! Subsequently I have sampled all the pools (apart from the main Pool 6 and the snail was in frequent (*) in Pool 2, occasional in Pools 5, 10, 13 and rare in the more shaded Pools 3a, 3b, 4 and 8. It was absent from Pools 7, 9 and 11.

Brown Moss, Pool numbering, devised by Sinker in 1959:

*For snails abundance is categorised as follows (No of individuals in a sample):

Rare	1-5
Occasional	6-15
Frequent	16-50
Common	51-100
Abundant	more than 101

Brown Moss Pool 2: *Omphiscola glabra* was most numerous in the marginal vegetation (rear of photo) (photo: Mags Cousins)

***Omphiscola glabra* habitat at Brown Moss Pool 2:** The best habitat for the snail was at the edge of *Sphagnum* zone where it transitions into dense *Juncus effusus* and *Comarum palustre* which then grades into *Typha latifolia* in deeper water where *O. glabra* are no longer present. (photo: Mags Cousins)

The overall conservation objective to restore the wetlands at Brown Moss by reducing tree cover and shading, reducing diffuse pollution and instigating light cattle or pony grazing would also benefit *Omphiscola glabra*, though proposals to remove nutrient rich silt could have detrimental effects. Brown Moss once again proves to be an exceptionally interesting suite of wetlands, worthy of concerted conservation efforts.

Adult *Omphiscola glabra* sample, placed on oak leaf for scale: (photo: Mags Cousins)

An impressive Cimbicid!

Maria Justamond

On Sunday 31st July, it was relatively warm but overcast, so I decided to visit Merrington Green just north of Bomere Heath. It's a small reserve, but rather varied in habitat with damp meadows dotted with lots of mature trees, woodlands and ponds.

Walking round I spotted a fairly large insect on some bracken under mature oak trees. I recognised it as one of the large sawflies from the Cimbicidae family. I took several photos from different angles to help with identification when I got home.

Searching in books and on the internet had me confused as I was unable to find a match! Nearest I could find was *Cimbex luteus* (Linnaeus, 1758), although my specimen was quite a bit paler. I wondered if it might be a teneral?

To try to get more help, I uploaded some images to Flickr, and Nigel Jones came to the rescue with an identification! It's a *Cimbex femoratus* (Linnaeus 1758) var. *pallens*. (Lep. 1829).

Thanks Nigel!

Editor's note: These huge sawflies are very infrequently recorded, despite the abundance of their foodplants. The SEDN database contains just two previous records for *C. femoratus* – from Shrewsbury and the Stiperstones.

Cimbex femoratus var. *pallens*. (photo: Maria Justamond)

Shropshire Ento Day 2016

Sunday 11 December 2016

Ento Day 2016 is the 7th annual Shropshire Entomology Day. We are hosted by Preston Montford Field Centre (Field Studies Council). The programme for the day is yet to be finalised but there will be a similar mix of presentations to the 2015 event which covered, for example, dragonflies, springtails, Rothamsted traps, multi-access keys, ecology of Small Nettle, biological control and much more.

For the first time, there is a small fee (£5) this year to help offset the costs of the day. Hopefully everyone will feel that this represents great value for a top day of entomological entertainment and socialising.

Attendees are free to bring displays, specimens, photographs, posters – in fact anything invertebrate related that you think may be of interest to others. The Invert Challenge Library and collections will be available to peruse.

The event is subsidised by the FSC Tomorrow's Biodiversity Project enabling us to halve the true cost to attendees. The £5 attendance fee includes tea & coffee, lunch and afternoon cake.

Registration and coffee from 10 am for a 10:30 am start. The event will conclude by 4 pm.

Book online at: http://www.field-studies-council.org/individuals-and-families/courses/2016/pm/ento-day-2016.aspx

People that can't book online should contact Kate at Preston Montford - Telephone: 01743 852040 or Email: enquiries.pm@field-studies-council.org.

Neomochtherus pallipes (Meigen, 1820) – is this Shropshire's rarest insect?

Nigel Jones

Undoubtedly the most significant Diptera find (possibly find of any invertebrate) in Shropshire during 2016, has been the discovery of the extremely rare robberfly *Neomochtherus pallipes* at Haughmond Hill. The discovery of a well established population beneath the view point on the hill is just the second ever sighting of this fly in Britain. It has previously only been recorded once, during 1990, at Prawle Point, Devon, where despite searchs it has not been found since. This appears to be one of our rarest insects, being of a size making it unlikely to be consistently overlooked.

The discovery of *N. pallipes* was fortuitous in the extreme. I was out with Brett Westwood, rather optimistically searching for the beefly *Bombylius canescens,* when Brett tubed a medium sized robberfly that he almost trod on as we ascended some rocks beneath the view point. I initially thought it was one of the common *Machimus* species, then on noticing its largely orange legs I thought it might be *Neoitamus cyanurus.* I had my doubts on either score, so I took it home to key it through Stubbs and Drake. I ran it through the key several times, such was my disbelief that it could be *N. pallipes*, but try as I might, I could not arrive at any other conclusion. A hasty email to robberfly expert Malcolm Smart elicited a rapid response, saying "this is exciting". Consequently, Malcolm and I visited the site the very next day and were ecstatic to find three more individuals – male and female on stony ground, between trees, on steep slopes below the viewpoint.

Some 17 sightings of individuals were made between 3 – 18 July, indicating that there is at least a small established population of *N. pallipes* at Haughmond Hill. Lyth Hill was investigated on 8 July by Bob Kemp and myself, but we saw none there. More searching will be undertaken in 2017 at Haughmond Hill and other candidate sites such as Grinshill Hill and Nesscliffe Hill.

Neomochtherus female at Haughmond Hill 8 July 2016 (photo: Nigel Jones)

Neomochtherus habitat at Haughmond Hill - stony grassland on steep slope (photo: Nigel Jones)

Diptera – true flies report

Nigel Jones

2016 has so far proven to be yet another dire season for Diptera. The abundance of many formerly numerous species appears to have plummeted to new lows, most notably in aphid feeding hoverflies such as *Syrphus*, *Epistrophe* and even *Episyrphus balteatus*. Masses of hoverflies and other Diptera nectaring on hogweed and other flower heads now seem sadly to be consigned to history (please let me be wrong on this). A depressing prospect indeed! One exception to this collapse was *Eupeodes corollae* which for a few weeks in June and July appeared in reasonable numbers at many sites. Thankfully, although abundance has been very low, there have been some really good finds, and it is just possible that in the absence of the normal background fuzz of myriad common flies, it has been easier to spot rarities in the field and in the net. Several Shropshire county firsts have been racked up including those listed below.

Apart from the sensational find of *Neomochtherus pallipes* reported elsewhere in this issue, another very noteworthy discovery was the hoverfly *Microdon mutabilis* Schönrogge, Barr, Wardlaw, Napper, Gardner, Breen, Elmes & Thomas, 2002 at Rhos Fiddle on 22 June. This record of a single male is significant for falling well outside this fly's previously known British distribution. The Shropshire record is the only one from a substantial area encompassing the Midlands and most of neighbouring mid Wales.

The Tachinid *Zaira cinerea* (Fallén, 1810) is a parasitoid of Carabid beetles and is a scarce fly in Britain. It was recorded for the first time in Shropshire at Gonsal quarry on 21 June when one was captured in a water trap. Another was trapped on 5 August. Also from Gonsal quarry, *Hydrophorus viridis* (Meigen, 1824) was swept from damp sand. This Dolichopid fly is considered a rare species of coasts, in Britain, but it is found occasionally in sand and gravel pits. Three were swept from damp areas at Gonsal Quarry on 6 June. Another first from Gonsal is *Leucophora cinerea* Robineau-Desvoidy, 1830 (family: Anthomyidae). This is a widespread species but had not previously been recorded in the county, probably on account of its white-silvery sheen, which blends brilliantly against the sandy substrates that it hangs about on and makes it very difficult to see.

The Underton quarry Shropshire Invertebrate Group field trip of 19 June yielded three females and two males of *Parochthiphila coronata* (Loew, 1858) - swept from dry and damp bare sandy areas. The 1991 status designation for this small 'silver' fly (family: Chamaemyidae) is RDB1 "endangered", but clearly this is an under recorded species, as there are several post 1991 records from a wide area of southern Britain. None the less this is a very infrequently recorded fly. Thirdly, a single female *Syntormon aulicum* (family Dolichopodidae) was swept from a damp flush. This is a very localised fly with a widespread range in Britain.

Acletoxenus formosus (Loew 1864), a gloriously red-eyed, glossy black, white and vibrant yellow marked fruit fly (family Drosophilidae) was a surprise find from my Shrewsbury garden on 30 June. It is a very infrequently recorded fly in Britain. Unusually for a Drosophilid it is predatory on small Homopterans.

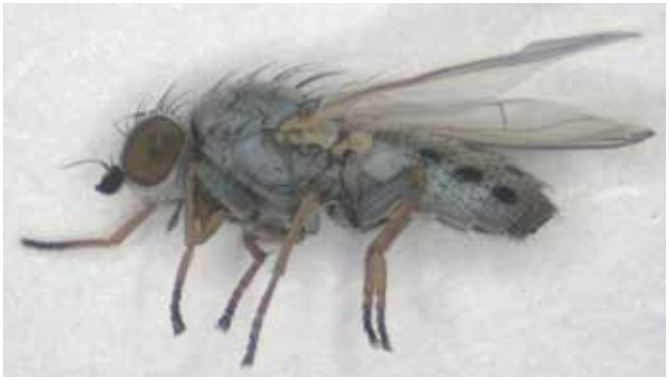
Ectinocera borealis was a most unexpected find from woodland at Haughmond Hill. According to the 1991 status review (Falk, 1991) it is a boreo-montane species throughout Europe and nothing is known about its life history. In Britain it is rare and occurs mainly in Caledonian pine forest, but there are odd outliers such as Devon and now near Shrewsbury. This small Sciomyzid fly was swept from a lime tree, close to two rotting beech boles, but perhaps, like the hoverfly *Callicera rufa* Schummel, 1842, it is also utilising dead pine on this site.

References

Falk, S.F. 1991. *A review of the scarce and threatened flies of Great Britain*. Part 1. JNCC.

Stubbs, A. and Drake, C.M. 2014. *British Soldierflies and Their Allies: A Field Guide to the Larger British Brachycera.* British Entomological and Natural History Society.

Acletoxenus formosus



Parochthiphila coronata female

Ectinocera borealis

Hydrophorus viridis male

Leucophora cinerea male

A PUZZLE – seeking a solution

Graham Wenman

We moved to our house and its small garden in Church Stretton in August 2012.

The front garden had two small grass 'lawns' and was otherwise well stocked with shrubs and flowering plants. However, we wanted a bit more "wildlife" so we decided to leave the smaller grass patch to grow and over the next few weeks collected seeds from a number of wild flowers when out locally and then scattered them on the said patch.

Some three and a half years later, there are knapweeds, Hypericums, campions, loosestrifes, yellow rattle and so forth – just as we had planned (Fig 1. Garden wildlife plot).

I normally run my light trap at the rear of the house and occasionally put a second trap in the front garden - this was the case on the 8th of June 2016 and in the trap next morning was a Grass Rivulet, *Perizoma albulata* (Denis & Schiffermüller, 1775) – a first for me.

A check on the Shropshire Entomological Data Network (SEDN) showed that the previous record was in 2004, this record being some 15 km west of our location - and with the whole of the Long Mynd and the Stiperstones in between!

So, to the puzzle: how did a Grass Rivulet arrive in the garden? Yes, the larvae feed on yellow rattle seed so there is a remote possibility that we imported larvae when we collected the seeds (more than 3 years ago), and we would have needed a pair to survive and breed continuously - and what are the chances of that, as there are no records of Grass Rivulet in any of the areas where the seeds were collected?

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The County Recorder Network

This information is accurate at the time of press. All these people carry out their roles as volunteers and we are indebted to their hard work.

Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths)

Butterflies – Tony Jacques Email: b-mcvc40@talktalk.net

Macro-moths – Tony Jacques Email: b-mcvc40@talktalk.net

Micro-moths – Godfrey Blunt Email: blunt.sig195@btinternet.com

Odonata (damselflies and dragonflies)

Dragonflies and damselflies (Odonata) Sue McLamb – Email: mclamb1@btinternet.com

Hemiptera (true bugs)

Terrestrial Bugs (now including shieldbugs), the Auchenorrhyncha and Psylloidea (Hemiptera) – Keith Fowler – Email: keith.c.fowler@blueyonder.co.uk

Aquatic Bugs (Hemiptera) – Frances Riding Email: franrid@hotmail.com

Coleoptera (beetles)

All families except Ladybirds and water beetles – Caroline Uff – Email: caroline.uff@nationaltrust.org.uk

Ladybirds (Coccinellidae) – Ian Thompson – Email: salopladybirds@f2s.com

Water beetles – Frances Riding – Email: franrid@hotmail.com

Diptera (true flies)

Brachyceran flies (Empidid flies, hoverflies, robber flies, horse flies, soldier flies, tachinid flies, conopid flies, picture-winged flies etc) – Nigel Jones Email: nipajones@tiscali.co.uk

Nematoceran flies (craneflies, winter gnats, bibionids, mosquitoes, etc) – Pete Boardman – Email: peteboardman@rocketmail.com

Leaf-mining flies (Agromyzidae) – Godfrey Blunt Email: blunt.sig195@btinternet.com

Hymenoptera (bees, wasps, ants etc)

Aculeates (bees, wasps and ants) and sawflies (symphyta) – Ian Cheeseborough – Email: crossocerus1@gmail.com

Aquatic insects

Mayflies (Ephemeroptera) - Ian Thompson – Email: salopladybirds@f2s.com

Trichocera (Caddisflies) and Plecoptera (Stoneflies) – Frances Riding – Email: franrid@hotmail.com

Orthopteroids

Orthopteroids (Grasshoppers, Crickets, Ground hoppers, Earwigs etc) – David Williams Email: dw1971@btinternet.com

Arachnids

Spiders Harvestman Pseudoscorpions – The Shropshire Spider Group – Email: nigel@canehoneysett.plus.com

Hexapods

Collembola (Springtails) – Francisca Sconce – Email: fsconce@harper-adams.ac.uk and Pete Boardman – Email: peteboardman@rocketmail.com

Others

Plant Galls (of whichever taxonomic order including mites) – Godfrey Blunt Email: blunt.sig195@btinternet.com